

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----075047 101803Z /53
O 101635Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6464
INFO USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 13015

STADIS////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, NPG
SUBJECT: ALLIED ATTITUDES ON NEUTRON BOMBS

REF: STATE 184569

1. " NEUTRON BOMB" ISSUE HAS SO FAR SEEMED GEOGRAPHICALLY AND POLITICALLY REMOTE TO MOST ITALIANS. HOWEVER WE HAVE A SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE, PERHAPS PRESAGED BY THE OPENING IN LAST FEW DAYS OF A LEFT PRESS ANTI-NEUTRON-BOMB CAMPAIGN. SIZE OF THE PROBLEM WILL BE DICTATED BOTH BY DEVELOPMENTS OUTSIDE ITALY AND BY MANNER IN WHICH GOI AND USG GRAPPLE WITH IT.

2. PUBLIC DISCUSSION SO FAR HAS ITS ORIGINS LARGELY IN EXTERNAL STIMULI. THE AMERASINGHE STATEMENT AT HIROSHIMA, THE NAGASAKI CEREMONIES, EXTENSIVE SOVIET PRESS CAMPAIGN INCLUDING THE ANTI-NUCLEAR BOMB STATEMENT OF 28 EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES (THE PCI AMONG THEM), CONTINUING DEBATE IN THE FRG, HAVE BEEN REPLAYED IN L'UNITA (COMMUNIST), AVANTI* (SOCIALIST), MESSAGERO AND LA REPUBBLICA, AND MORE RECENTLY PICKED UP IN A FEW PARLIAMENTARY

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INTERPELLATIONS (WHICH WILL NOT BE DEALT WITH UNTIL SOMETIME IN THE FALL).

3. CURIOUSLY, ITALIAN COMMENTATORS HAVE NOT SO FAR DEALT WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE "NEUTRON BOMB" IN A SPECIFICALLY ITALIAN CONTEXT. THEIR TREATMENT HAS BEEN MORE GENERAL, CAST IN ADVERSE AND MORALISTIC TERMS AND

SEEMING TO ASSUME THAT THE QUESTION OF DEPLOYMENT IS
RELATED TO THE CENTRAL FRONT.

4. THE ONLY INDICATION TO DATE OF AN OFFICIAL GOI VIEW
DERIVES FROM PRIMIN ANDREOTTI'S CONVERSATION WITH
PRESIDENT CARTER (STATE 179716) WHICH SEEMED TO
SUGGEST A TACIT AND HIGHLY GENERALIZED "NO OBJECTION"
SHOULD THE U.S. DECIDE TO PROCEED. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE
ISSUE BECOME THE SUBJECT OF DOMESTIC HEAT, THE GOI STANCE
COULD BECOME VEN MORE AMBIVALENT.

5. CURRENT LEVEL OF DEBATE, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, POSES NO
SPECIAL PROBLEM FOR U.S. INTERESTS. HOWEVER WE WILL BE
ALERT FOR EITHER (OR BOTH) OF TWO DEVELOPMENTS WHICH
COULD MAKE THE SITUATION MORE DIFFICULT TO HANDLE. FIRST,
LOCAL DECIBLE LEVEL WILL DPEND IN LARGE PART ON HOW
GOES THE DEBATE ON THE CENTRAL FRONT. IN PARTICULAR,
IF POLEMICS IN FRG DIE DOWN, ANY ITALIAN DEBATE
IS LIKELY TO GO THE SAME WAY.

6. SECOND BUT MORE IMPORTANT IS WHETHER
ITALIANS BEGIN TO DEBATE "NEUTRON BOMB" IN TERMS OF
POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT AND USE IN ITALY, E.G., AS A
STOPPER FOR THE GORIZIA GAP. A DEBATE CAST IN THOSE
TERMS WOULD GRASP ITALIAN ATTENTION, SUMMER DOLDRUMS
OR NO, AND OUR PROPOSED DEPLOYMENTS WOULD BECOME A SHARP
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FOCUS OF ITALIAN ATTENTION.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----075030 101807Z /53
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 13015

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7. WE NOTE THAT ANY SUCH DEBATE COULD BE COMPLICATED AND INFLAMED IF THE "NUCLEAR BOMB" ISSUE BECOMES PUBLICLY ENMESHED WITH THE PRM-10 CONTROVERSY. ANTI-NUCLEAR-BOMB WRITERS WOULD READILY ADDUCE ANY U.S. PRODUCTION DECISION AS EVIDENCE, FOR EXAMPLE, OF OUR INTENT OR WILLINGNESS TO GIVE GROUND IN EUROPE UNDER WP ATTACK. THAT THE ARGUMENT COULD BE RUN AS STRONGLY IN THE CONTRARY DIRECTIONS (I.E., THE WEAPON IS EVIDENCE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO FORWARD DEFENSE) WOULD ONLY STIMULATE THE CONTROVERSY.

8. SHOULD ITALY MOVE TO THE LEVEL OF DEBATE FOUND TODAY IN, SAY, THE FRG, THE INCUMBENT GOVERNMENT WOULD FIND ITSELF IN A QUANDRY, AND HOPING NOT RPT NOT TO HAVE TO MAKE A HARD, PUBLIC DECISION EITHER WAY. IN ANY EVENT, OF COURSE, THE GOI WILL EXPECT TO BE CONSULTED PROMPTLY AND FULLY SHOULD U.S. PLANS INCLUDE POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF THE WEAPON IN ITALY.

9. WITH THE FOREGOING AS BACKGROUND, THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT:

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-. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, PENDING U.S. ACTION, OUR OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE CLEAR THAT USG IS IN A CONSULTATIVE AND DELIBERATIVE STATE RE PRODUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT. NO DECISION YET TAKEN, IN SHORT.

B. WE HARMONIZE OUR DECISIONS AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE WITH OUR CENTRAL EUROPEAN ALLIES AS WELL, OF COURSE, AS WITH THE GOI IF EVENTUAL DEPLOYMENT IN ITALY IS CONTEMPLATED.

C. AS RECOMMENDED BY PRIMIN ANDREOTTI TO PRESIDENT CARTER, "ANY DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE NEUTRON BOMB BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CLEAR EXPLANATION TO THE WORLD AT LARGE ABOUT THE NATURE, PURPOSES AND DOCTRINE OF THE WEAPON", INCLUDING THE CHANGING NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE THREAT WHICH IT WOULD HELP COUNTER.

D. SHOULD THE PRM-10 CONTROVERSY STILL BE CURRENT IF AND WHEN ANY AFFIRMATIVE USG DECISION IS ANNOUNCED, OUR RATIONALE FOR PRODUCTION AND DEPLOYMENT SHOULD COUNTER,

OR AT LEAST NOT REINFORCE, THE ARGUMENTS OF THOSE WHO DISTRUST THE
VALIDITY OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO FORWARD DEFENSE.

E. SEEK AND EMPLOY ALL APPROPRIATE WAYS TO MINIMIZE THE
DAMAGE INHERENT IN THE TERM "NEUTRON BOMB", WITH ITS
CATAclySMIC CONNOTATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE,
THIS EMBASSY PUBLICLY NEVER USES "NEUTRON BOMB"
WITHOUT QUOTES AND IN ITALIAN TEXTS WE IDENTIFY IT
AS THE "NEW TACTICAL WEAPON" ("NUOVO ORDIGNO TATTICO").
RATHER THAN REFERRING TO THE "NEUTRON BOMB" OR
STRESSING THE WEAPON'S PRINCIPAL HOMICIDAL ELEMENT
("ENHANCED RADIATION"), USG SPOKESMEN SHOULD IN OUR
VIEW USE A MORE APPPOSITE TERM. WE WOULD SUGGEST
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SOMETHING LIKE "REDUCED BLAST WARHEAD".HOLMES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
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Concepts: ALLIANCE, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, NUCLEAR WARHEADS, MISSILES
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